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ABSTRACT

This action research compilation contains two research projects: "Increasing Student Appreciation of Poetry through the Use of Contemporary Music" by Paul G. Senjem and "Are Men and Women Created Equal? Gender in the Classroom" by Jennifer Joyce Plitzuweit. The researcher/author of the first paper states that his goal was to make exposure to poetry more pleasant for his 78 high school sophomore students by including contemporary music in the poetry unit plan. The paper explains that as part of a 3-week unit he set up a data collection process before and after the poetry unit; the data collection tool was a pre- and post-form. It states that after data collection responses were tabulated and converted into a mean, mode, and median. Includes data; contains 9 references. The researcher/author of the second paper divided her two eighth-grade classes by gender for three quarters of the school year (16 consistent female participants and 20 consistent male participants) to see if this would affect learning. According to the paper, she journaled about similarities and differences and documented grade increases and decreases. The paper's researcher/author feels that it was worth splitting the classes by gender and that the students were more successful academically. Contains a 6-item bibliography and attached data. (NKA)

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Thomas F. Sherman (Ed.D. Education) and Lundquist, Margaret (M.S. Education)

COMPILATION OF ACTION RESEARCH PAPERS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION

These papers are partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science Degree in Education at Winona State University.

Action Research was encouraged to stimulate a practitioner approach to curricular and instructional renewal and improvement. The traditional format for the papers helped to coach fundamental research strategies. The students were encouraged to keep their questions and hypothesis directed at very specific issues in their teaching environment.

Each student was required to assemble an advisory team that included:

1) One facilitator or lead advisor, to provide support in the research design and process,

2) Four-to-six fellow graduate students to interpret and synthesize the organizational and writing process, and an

3) Outside content specialist to assure the knowledge base. Outside refers to a person outside the learning community who is a recognized specialist in the content area of the action research. Thus, if the action research related to music, a music specialist was required as a member of the advisory team.

The advisory team provided critical support to the successful paper.

The action research concluded with an oral examination or presentation to encourage and develop leadership skills through informing their associates, their departments or their schools.

Author Index

Plitzuweit, Jennifer 26

Senjem, Paul 1

INCREASING STUDENT APPRECIATION OF POETRY THROUGH THE USE OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

By

Paul Senjem

B.S., WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY, 1972

A CAPSTONE ACTION REASEARCH WRITE UP

FOR

WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY

MASTERS OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN EDUCATION

FALL 2002

ROCHESTER LEARNING COMMUNITY #4

This capstone project entitled:

Increasing Student Appreciation of

Poetry Through the Use of Contemporary Music

Written by Paul Senjem

Has been approved by Winona State University

For the Department of Education

Dr. Thomas Sherman

Dan Rechtzigel

Randy Hockinson

Matt Nelson

Rich Kincaid

DATE 11/27/02

The signatories have examined the final copy of this capstone project, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above-mentioned discipline.

Senjem, Paul G. (M.S., [Education])

Increasing Student Appreciation of Poetry Through the Use of Contemporary Music.

Capstone Project directed by Dr. Thomas Sherman

My capstone project was an action research project attempting to discover if combining contemporary music with the study of poetry would increase student appreciation of poetry.

The teaching of poetry in the English classroom has been a challenge. As part of a well-rounded English curriculum students should be exposed to the genre. My goal was to make that exposure to poetry more pleasing for my students by including contemporary music in the poetry unit plan. By making the experience more pleasant I hoped to increase student engagement and learning. If students achieved increased engagement and learning I felt they would then develop a greater appreciation for poetry.

I began my capstone in the classroom after researching the use of music in the classroom, teaching poetry, and alternative methods for instruction. I then implemented a three-week poetry unit designed to increase student appreciation of poetry.

As part of the three-week unit I set up a data collection process before and after the poetry unit. The data collection tool was a pre and post survey form. Because judging "appreciation" is a rather abstract quality I felt the survey data collection tool was most suitable.

After collecting the data I tabulated the responses. I then converted the responses into a mean (average of all scores), mode (most frequent response), and median (middle score). From this data I was able to draw conclusions about my capstone proposal.

My conclusions drawn from the data showed my capstone to be generally successful. It was also enlightening to see how far students have to be moved for them to appreciate poetry. I enjoyed my research. Teaching is never easy but a teacher will have a greater chance of success if he or she knows where they are beginning and where they are going.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I taught American literature to 78 sophomore students during the 2001-2002 school year. The course included numerous aspects of the English curriculum. The three general areas covered in the course-included grammar, composition, and literature in a yearlong course. The sophomore students were divided into three sections and they were a part of my teaching assignment at Kenyon-Wanamingo, small rural communities in Goodhue County approximately 40 miles northwest of Rochester, Minnesota.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

When I began my capstone process I was also beginning my twenty-eighth year of teaching. I believed then, as I do now, that I needed to examine what I did in the classroom and work to improve my curriculum and instruction techniques. As a part of my literature curriculum I taught poetry to my sophomores. I felt that the teaching of poetry could be part of a lifelong learning experience for my students. I attempted to do this by making poetry relevant to them in their daily lives. If I could make poetry relevant to them I hoped to be able to create a more successful learning experience, which in turn would hopefully lead to a more successful classroom.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

I felt that teaching an appreciation of the arts to high school students had always been a challenging task. The exceptions were the specific students who had developed a personal interest in one of the specific art forms. My problem was to engage as many of my student as possible in the study of poetry. The teaching of poetry had always been a challenging task in my classroom.

The challenge, for me, was to create an atmosphere that was not only conducive to the learning of the genre, poetry, but also to develop a willingness to appreciate that genre, poetry. I had always believed poetry was an important part of the literature curriculum. I also believed students should be exposed to the study of poetry. Finding the link between poetry and my students' everyday lives became the focus of my capstone project.

The link, for me, became the inherent qualities of music and poetry. I felt both had shared characteristics that when conveyed properly could lead my student to a greater appreciation of poetry. The irony was in my belief that while most students enjoyed some form of music most had developed an under appreciation for poetry. I believed that in most cases my student's favorite songs were simply poetry combined with music. From this realization it became my intent to investigate whether music plus the examination of the lyrics in my student's favorite music would lead to a greater appreciation of poetry for my students.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION

My question then became, "Will using contemporary songs and lyrics as an instructional tool be an effective addition to my curriculum and increase my students' appreciation of poetry"? I certainly hoped that I could be successful with the capstone project but recognized the difficulty of the task I had set for myself.

V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

I felt I needed to define five key terms to keep my study and evaluation of the capstone project focused. The first of these was genre. Genre is a category of literary composition characterized by a specific style, form, or content. Poetry fell under the

larger category of genre. Poetry is writing that formulates a concentrated, imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific, emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm. Music combined with lyrics then falls, by its very nature, easily into a similar category with poetry. Lyrics are, simply put, the words of a song. Music is vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds which have rhythm, melody, or harmony. The fifth term I needed to define was appreciation. Appreciation is a sensitive awareness; a recognition of aesthetic values. I kept these five terms as the center of my capstone proposal. This allowed me to maintain a specific focus and to develop a curriculum to test my capstone proposal.

IV. LIMITATIONS of the STUDY

There were limitations to the study of my capstone. Although there is a vast amount of resource material on teaching poetry and increasing learning with music I found no resources that dealt specifically with my capstone proposal. I also needed to recognize that previous student experience, despite my efforts, could alter the results of my proposal, positively or negatively. Musical tastes, personal preferences that my students had could also influence the results of my capstone. I was also confined to one style of class presentation for all. This limited the possibility of a control group. Finally, student absences during portions of the capstone unit could again alter the results of the capstone proposal.

VII. LITERATURE REVIEW

It became apparent to me that before beginning my proposal I needed to explore

the perception of poetry by society in general. In my 28 years of teaching of teaching I had developed a personal view of that perception. My students, I felt, were an accurate indicator of societal attitudes towards poetry in general. Their beliefs had been fostered since birth from their experience. Unfortunately, the attitude that my students developed appeared to lean to the negative side of the spectrum.

Carlson (October 1999) helped me understand this perception of poetry. After all, it is true, that while there are many successful poets in the world their names are not as well known as the names of entertainers or athletes. It was indisputable that during this age of technology students spend more of their time fascinated by the exploits of entertainers and athletes than they did appreciating the art of poetry. It was hard to imagine a family with the DVD disconnected, television turned off, an absence of video games, and no music playing as they sat together reading and sharing perceptions of poetry of the past and present.

Also, according to Carlson (October 1999) an appreciation of poetry demands a higher degree of literacy. Because of that fact, there are far less interested people who venture into the realm of appreciating the art form of poetry. I agreed with Carlson's assertion and recognized that the majority of my students have developed in environments where television was an essential part of home life and a newspaper was a luxury. Poetry is, by nature, a less popular activity than entertainment or sports. Because it is less popular there are simply fewer consumers.

However, teenagers like adults, also had certain needs that made the teaching of poetry to them possible. They might also be inclined to develop an appreciation of poetry as a part of their awareness of the world around them. As Carlson (September

1999) stated teenagers were interested in self-expression, sharing their feelings, sharing their thoughts and sharing their ideas. I felt if I could enable this process of sharing themselves I could teach a greater appreciation of poetry. I felt that although teenagers did not have the same broad based knowledge as adults they could be excited into sharing their perceptions based on the experiences that they had. In fact, I believed, if properly motivated, teenagers would be more willing to share the perceptions they developed through their experience. I needed to make those experiences relate to their world and the world of poetry and music.

I felt the need to at least explore the "Mozart Effect". The research and findings by co-discoverer Dr. Gordon Shaw showed that music could enhance how we think, reason, and create. Although my capstone did not revolve around the use of classical music it inspired me to develop a program that used contemporary music. I recognized that Shaw's research gave little or no credit to contemporary music for increasing learning. For me, however, the use of music was a tool to promote student engagement in poetry. While the lyrics became the primary focus of my capstone the music became a side bar that I hoped would increase my chances of reaching my goal. I found it interesting in my research that a new study published in Psychological Science (July 1999) challenged the so-called "Mozart Effect". In fact, the conclusion drawn was that there was little evidence to support the existence of the "Mozart Effect".

Both of the preceding viewpoints gave me little concrete knowledge of the results I would achieve in my capstone project. They did, however, encourage me to attempt the use of music in my classroom in connection with my teaching of poetry.

Further inspiration was acquired after reviewing the research done by Yiftach Levy at San Diego State University. While his research did not relate exactly to my capstone, it did suggest that experimenting with music in the classroom would be helpful for teachers and students. It was my hope that perhaps my capstone would be beneficial to future educators and students.

My goal was not to create 78 avid writers of poetry. I did feel, however, if I researched what inspired writers to write I would be able to apply that to my presentation methods. I agreed with Carlson (Winter 200) that exposing my students to poetry was an important step in the process. Reading to them, even while I recognized it was way over their heads, was part of he process of developing a sense of appreciation for poetry in my students. I included a wide variety of material and recognized that in the initial stages comprehension of the poetry would be difficult for many.

Carlson (Autumn 2001) also led me to believe that I could appeal to the masses, or at least to my sophomore English class. We all have things that are most important to us. Poetry, because it ranges from humor to grief, covers the full range of human emotions. It was my hope to tap into those emotions and once again develop a feeling of engagement for my students. By exploring as much poetry as possible in conjunction with contemporary music I hoped to show my students the relevance of poetry in their lives. I fully believed that with relevance comes appreciation. All of my students could read and write to varying degrees. If I could move them beyond that to sharing their thoughts, dreams, or plans I felt I could increase their appreciation of poetry. I also agreed with Vince Gotera that I needed to

move my students from a solipsistic (self is the only existent thing) viewpoint to a connection between them and the world in which they live. To paraphrase Carlson (November 1999), all of my students have things tucked away in their mind, possibly the exploration of music and poetry would allow them to say it. Hence, the poetry becomes relevant and increases student appreciation of said poetry.

My final review process centered on what steps could be taken to create an effective classroom atmosphere for the students. By reviewing Chuck Salter's research taken from other teachers I was able to reaffirm and incorporate classroom conditions that enabled my students to learn. These teacher tips included:

" 1. It's not about you; it's about them." (Salter 2)

" 2. Study your students." (Salter 2)

" 3. Students take risks when teachers create a safe environment." (Salter 2)

" 4. Great teachers exude passion as well as purpose." (Salter 2)

" 5. Students learn when teachers show them how much they need to learn." (Salter 3)

" 6. Keep it clear even if you can't keep it simple." (Salter 3)

" 7. Practice vulnerability without sacrificing credibility." (Salter 3)

" 8. Teach from the heart." (Salter 4)

" 9. Repeat the important points." (Salter 4)

"10. Good teachers ask good questions." (Salter 4)

"11. You're not passing out information." (Salter 5)

"12. Stop talking – and start listening." (Salter 5)

"13. Learn what to listen for." (Salter 5)

"14. Let your students teach each other." (Salter 6)

"15. Avoid using the same approach for everyone." (Salter 6)

"16. Never stop teaching." (Salter 6)

I recognized that it would be impossible to incorporate all 16 tips in one 45-minute class period but I relied on these tips to design my overall capstone.

In effect my literature review had a two-fold purpose. I not only felt it was important to review the concept of teaching poetry but also to review the concept of teaching. I felt strongly that success in achieving my capstone goal depended not only on the materials, which I used, but also on the manner in which I presented those materials.

VIII. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

My classroom capstone project was a unit that I designed to cover approximately three weeks of classroom time. It included a variety of classroom instructional techniques. To lay a foundation for student work I implemented traditional teaching methods (lecture) with oral reading and group work. In this phase the basic techniques of poetry were discussed and taught. Specific techniques of poetry taught were alliteration, assonance, consonance, end-rhyme, free verse, internal rhyme, lyric, metaphor, onomatopoeia, paradox, personification, rhyme, rhythm, simile, symbolism, and theme.

With each technique a specific poem was taught. This enabled students to be exposed to a number of different styles of poetry. It also enabled the students to be aware of different thematic implications contained in the various poems. The initial poems were taught by the instructor with later material covered in groups of four to

five students. The student presentations were monitored by the instructor and aided if lacking in quality.

The final step in the unit consisted of an oral presentation to the class. The presentation consisted of a poem and a song. A simple rubric was used to determine if students successfully completed their presentation.

My students were sophomores. Classes were mixed with boys and girls. Initial mastery of the concept of poetry was the focus in the beginning of the unit. I began by reading the poems aloud to the class as they followed along in their text. I would then teach the appropriate technique of poetry which was contained in the poem. In addition to the technique, the theme of the poem was also discussed. The idea of analyzing the theme of a poem was the most difficult task for my students.

Following my presentation of six techniques of poetry, groups were formed to present the remaining ten techniques. Each group was responsible for presenting two techniques and two assigned poems representative of those techniques. Special emphasis was given to the group's presentation of the theme for the assigned poem. The theme developed by the students had to be reinforced with evidence from the text. At this point in the unit I would aid the groups if they struggled with either the techniques of poetry or the identification of the poem's theme.

Finally, in step three, my students moved from groups of five or six students to groups of two students. At this time each group chose a poem from an anthology to present to the class. The qualifications were that the poem could not be a poem previously discussed nor could any other group present the same poem. The paired group then had to choose a song that shared the same theme as their poem. The song

could be from any style of music they chose but the lyrics had a stern qualifier. The lyrics had to be suitable for the English classroom.

When the presentations were delivered they were graded by a criteria given to the students before presenting. The students were responsible for identifying three different techniques in the poem. They had to explain the technique and give an example from the poem that illustrated the technique. They were not allowed to use any technique that involved rhyme or rhythm. They then played the song of their choice and again identified, explained, and gave examples of three different techniques of poetry in their song. Again they were not allowed to use rhyme or rhythm as a technique to present to the class. Finally, the group had to present one common theme to the class that represented the song and the poem. In each case their analysis of the theme had to be supported with details from the song and the poem.

The rubric for grading the presentation appears below.

Poem Presentation _____
Poem Theme _____
Technique One _____
Technique Two _____
Technique Three _____

Song Presentation _____
Song Theme _____
Technique One _____
Technique Two _____
Technique Three _____

Each part of the rubric is worth one point. A score of nine or higher equaled an A, eight was a B, seven was a C, six was a D, and lower than six constituted a failing grade.

My capstone proposal centered around increasing my students' appreciation of poetry. The data collection tools that I chose to use were student surveys before and after completing the unit. Since measuring increased appreciation is an abstract idea I felt the pre and post surveys would give me accurate data to determine if my methodology was successful or unsuccessful. Based on the results of the survey and the success of the unit in my classroom I felt that the data accurately reflected a successful teaching experience for myself and a successful learning experience for my sophomores.

My surveys consisted of six simple questions for my students. The second survey was patterned after the first survey. While I had to make minor adjustments to the questions in survey number two the questions related so closely that I felt my data was accurate. To eliminate bias or prejudicial slants in my surveys I had them examined by my advisory group. With their approval I felt I had an accurate device to measure the success or failure of my capstone project.

The data to analyze my capstone project was collected on the first and last day of the capstone unit. Because my sampling was quite large I did not collect late surveys either before or after completing the poetry unit. All surveys were completed and collected in the classroom. Students were not allowed to confer with each other when completing their surveys. There were no names written on the surveys to ensure student anonymity and to minimize student attempts to please or displease the

instructor. I also told students to answer only those questions they felt comfortable answering. I felt this would result in fewer responses completed simply to answer the questions. The survey format and results are below:

SURVEY NUMBER ONE

How much do you read poetry?

Very Much	5	4	3	2	1	Never
Results:	3	11	14	13	26	

Do you read poetry often?

Weekly	5	4	3	2	1	Never
Results:	0	2	16	9	44	

Do you think songs are poetry?

Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
Results:	15	13	19	6	12	

Do you write poetry?

Weekly	5	4	3	2	1	Never
Results:	2	6	6	14	38	

Have you ever bought a poetry book?

Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
Results:	12	4	3	3	42	

Is poetry difficult to understand?

Easy	5	4	3	2	1	Very Difficult
Results:	3	3	26	17	17	

SURVEY NUMBER TWO

How much do you like poetry now?

Very Much	5	4	3	2	1	None
Results:	3	18	22	16	18	

Would you read poetry again?

Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
Results:	18	9	13	12	24	

Do you think songs are poetry?

Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
Results:	44	17	9	4	2	

Would you write poetry now?

Often	5	4	3	2	1	Never
Results:	5	7	13	11	32	

Would you buy a poetry book?

Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
Results:	11	9	8	15	31	

Is poetry easier to understand?

Yes	5	4	3	2	2	No
Results:	5	20	18	17	18	

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

After I collected my data my next task was to analyze the data. When I looked at the data it appeared my unit had a positive effect on my students appreciation of poetry. To better determine my success I used the statistical

categories of Mean, Mode, and Median to determine changes in my students' attitude toward poetry. The results of that analysis follow below. Mean indicates the average score, Mode indicates the number most frequent, and Median indicates the middle score.

	Survey One	Survey Two
Question One (Mean)	**2.2**	**2.6**
Question One (Mode)	**1**	**3**
Question One (Median)	**2**	**3**

From these scores I deduced that my student's enjoyment of poetry increased. With that increased enjoyment had to have come an increased appreciation of poetry. While I was satisfied with moving the majority of my students to a greater appreciation of poetry the results also showed that teaching poetry is a huge challenge for the classroom teacher.

	Survey One	Survey Two
Question Two (Mean)	**1.6**	**2.8**
Question Two (Mode)	**1**	**1**
Question Two (Median)	**1**	**3**

This question examined students' willingness to read poetry. On the surface it appeared the unit may have failed because the most frequent answer was "no". However, the rise in both the mean and median scores suggest differently. In fact a

substantial number of students showed a willingness to read poetry again. The results gave me a justification for repeating the unit.

	Survey One	Survey Two
Question Three (Mean)	**3.2**	**4.2**
Question Three (Mode)	**3**	**5**
Question Three (Median)	**3**	**5**

The results of this question were the most satisfying for myself. The question dealt with my students' perception of poetry. If I could get them to acknowledge the link between contemporary music and poetry I had them on the path to a greater appreciation of poetry. While I was not naïve enough to believe that poetry would become the center of their lives I took a great joy in recognizing that they now recognized their music was also a form of poetry.

	Survey One	Survey Two
Question Four (Mean)	**1.7**	**2.1**
Question Four (Mode)	**1**	**1**
Question Four (Median)	**1**	**2**

The results of this survey question were not surprising. I did not expect the results to change a great deal. I did not believe it would be reasonable to expect students to begin writing poetry because of a three-week unit I presented in class. However, I felt this survey question still reflected positively on my capstone proposal.

After the unit concluded there were more students who would consider writing poetry than there had been before.

	Survey One	Survey Two
Question Five (Mean)	**2.0**	**2.7**
Question Five (Mode)	**1**	**1**
Question Five (Median)	**1**	**2**

If my goal would have been to inspire my students to purchase a poetry book I would have been disheartened by the results of this question. I did not expect them to race out and purchase a book of poetry. I was encouraged to note that more of my students would consider the purchase of a book of poetry. I made the bold assumption that they would then also read the book. Again, the tendency to move in a positive direction toward their perception of poetry showed me an increased appreciation of poetry.

	Survey One	Survey Two
Question Six (Mean)	**2.3**	**2.7**
Question Six (Mode)	**3**	**4**
Question Six (Median)	**2**	**3**

I felt validated when the results of this survey question were tabulated. It showed an increased student mastery of the genre poetry. I felt the increase in all categories showed an effectiveness in the unit I presented. My students in general

made a jump to a greater understanding of poetry. I felt a greater understanding of poetry had to lead to a greater appreciation for the genre.

X. CONCLUSION / ACTION PLAN

My most important conclusion was that students could gain a greater appreciation of poetry. I believed that appreciation was enhanced through the use of contemporary music. It was apparent that there existed a preconceived negative attitude toward poetry and the study of it. Because of that attitude poetry was a difficult subject to teach. My greatest aid in teaching poetry was to be flexible in my teaching methods. Mixing traditional and non-traditional teaching methods allowed my students the freedom to explore a part of their learning through their own resources.

An additional conclusion I was able to draw was that with a structured, well thought out plan attitudes could be changed. While I was not able to change all of my students, a greater majority developed a greater appreciation for poetry. I believed this was because I allowed them to bring something of themselves, their personal contemporary music favorites, into the instructional setting.

If I was to make a change in the unit it would be one of addition, not subtraction. What I used worked well for me. I believed that the addition of a creative, personal writing assignment might help enhance student appreciation of poetry. It was difficult to get everything right the first time but I was pleased to have made the effort.

To my colleagues I would say be flexible in your presentations and use the techniques and methods that I tried. They are not difficult, they produced an excited

and productive classroom, and the students and I had enjoyable classroom experiences throughout the unit.

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Are Men and Women Created Equal?
Gender in the Classroom

by

Jennifer Joyce Plitzuweit
B.S., Winona State University, 1997

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of
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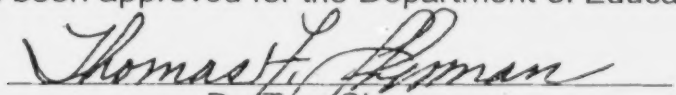
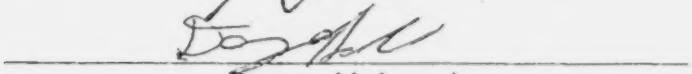
For the requirement for the degree of
Master of Science in Education
2002

This thesis entitled:
Are Men and Women Created Equal?
Gender in the Classroom
written by Jennifer Joyce Plitzuweit
has been approved for the Department of Education



Dr. Tom Sherman



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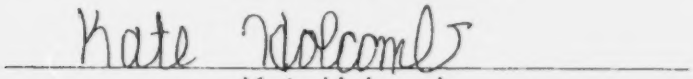

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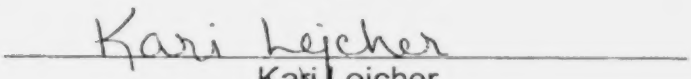

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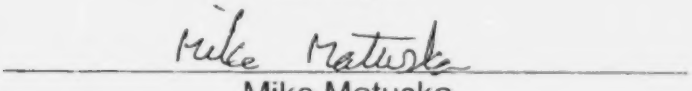

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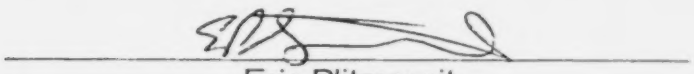

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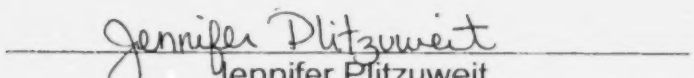

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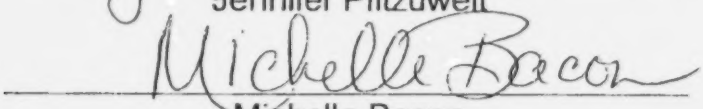

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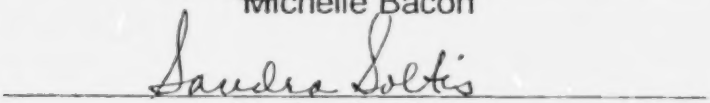

Dr. Sandra Soltis

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Plitzuweit, Jennifer Joyce (M.S. in Education)
"Are Men and Women Created Equal? Gender in the Classroom"
Thesis directed by Dr. Tom Sherman

In my teacher training and prior experiences, I taught to individuals and their various intelligences. However, my teaching style has never been sensitive to the individual needs of male and female learners.

To learn more about gender differences, I read the book *Boys and Girls Learn Differently!* by Michael Gurian, who has studied 30 cultures to learn about the biological gender differences and how they affect learning.

Next, I divided two classes by gender for three quarters of the school year.

I had 16 consistent participants in my all girls' class, and 20 consistent participants in my all boys' class. Throughout the year, I journaled about similarities and differences between the same gender classes throughout the year, and documented grade increases and decreases.

After a lot of reading and reflecting on my experiences, I feel it was worth splitting two of my classes by gender. I feel the students were more successful academically, they had fewer distractions, and they worked together as a team. I also feel I was able to bond with these classes because of the various opportunities for the students to be themselves.

Do I believe classes should be split by gender all the time? No. I feel it is important for males and females to learn to work together in a safe learning environment, but I feel that by giving these young adolescents the opportunity to be themselves in at least one class a day, they felt more confident about

who they were and the abilities and skills they had. Because of the structural differences and the various opportunities for different literature, project organization, bonding opportunities, and the motivation options geared toward the gender's interests and needs, the students were more successful. I think a single-gender class is a great option for middle school adolescents.

This thesis is dedicated to Ellen Hanson.
Thank you for inspiring me to stretch my wings and dance with a new outlook in my classroom. Your support, encouragement and guidance have always allowed me to do my best.

I also want to thank my students, parents, and faculty from the 2001-2002 school year for allowing me to try a new approach to learning.

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I. Introduction

Males and females are different. There have been many books about male and female differences in communication, relationships, and thinking. So, why wouldn't males and females learn differently, too? I didn't know enough information about male and female learning styles, and I taught my classes the way I learned best. If I were to continue to teach using the same style, I would only meet the needs of some of my students.

Need for the Study:

In the past, I haven't paid attention to the gender of the students passing and failing my Language Arts class. However, many boys seem to be the target of the latest research for students failing classes and dropping out. Have I been insensitive to the needs of my students, and are there ways boys can be more successful in Language Arts? According to the article "Are Boys the Weaker Sex?" from the February 2002 Reader's Digest,

> "Boys are in serious trouble. They get the lowest grades that teachers dole out. They make up two-thirds of students labeled learning disabled. They are the suspects in eight out of ten arrests on drug and alcohol charges, and are arrested for over 70% of juvenile crimes. They are also less likely to go to college. By 2007, universities are projected to enroll 6.9 million men compared with 9.2 million women" (p.110).

It is important for educators to be more aware of the needs of their students. All students should be treated as individuals, and beyond multiple intelligences, educators need to be aware of male and female brain-based research and how gender affects learning.

Statement of the Problem:

Teachers are not trained in the development of the brain. According to Michael Gurian,

"...for far too many decades, biological information about the development of a child's brain, as well as the crucial differences between male and female brain development, has been fragmentary, incomplete, and sometimes nonexistent" (p.15).

Teachers are unprepared to deal with the differences between males and females. In my classroom males are failing academically.

Statement of the Question:

In what ways can brain-based gender differences be used in an eighth grade Language Arts classroom? Will splitting classes by gender reflect student progress?

Definition of Terms:

1. brain-based research:

   When referring to brain-based research, the following three fields are incorporated:

   a. Neurological and endocrinological (hormonal) effects on learning and behavior

   b. Developmental psychology, especially the effects of natural human development cycles on learning and behavior

   c. Gender-difference research, that is, research comparing both environmental and neurobiological areas of differences (and similarities) between boys and girls (Gurian p.4).

2. male brain: tends to show right hemispheric dominance (Sousa 92).

3. female brain: tends to show left hemispheric dominance (Sousa 92).

4. bridge brain: boys and girls who possess nearly equal qualities of both the male and female brains (Gurian 16).

Limitations of the Study:

There were a number of limitations in my research. The first limitation I had was that not all of the ideas listed in Michael Gurian's "ultimate middle school classroom" were realistic or measurable for a public school system or in my classroom. The second limitation was the fact that Friedell Middle School is a choice public school, which means my students may not fit the "norm" for a middle school population. Students in my class were students that were not part of a reading intervention program, which means, all my students were reading one year behind, at, or above grade level. At the same time, the students in my class may have been different from the "norm" because they may have chosen a choice middle school for various reasons. Some may have attended one or more middle schools before trying Friedell, while others may have been more academic and in need of a smaller setting.

II. Literature Review

Boys and girls are different. Each student is an individual. It is important that educators, caregivers, and parents understand that each child is unique, but also that because male and female brains are different, boys and girls learn differently.

The following information and research are not meant to stereotype or limit genders. Instead, the hope is that the material will "add wisdom to the individuality already assumed in every human" (Gurian 16). These differences do not determine the superiority of one gender over another, but there are some things that boys tend to be better at and vice versa. Perhaps a few doors will open to educators about their students.

At various trainings and seminars given by Michael Gurian and the Gurian Institute, only about 10% - 20% of attendees have responded that they have been trained in the development of the brain (Gurian 15). Biological information and crucial differences between male and female brain development is often "incomplete, and sometimes fragmentary" in teacher education programs (Gurian 15).

So how are the male and female brains different? The main differences are structural and developmental, chemical, hormonal, functional, and emotional. These five areas of differences in gender allow teachers, parents, and caregivers to understand why learning may take place differently by each gender.

The first way male and female brains are different are developmental and structural. In general, the female brain matures earlier than the males' (Gurian 19, 27). The most commonly discussed structural difference in the brain is in the corpus callosum. The corpus callosum is the bundle of nerves that connects the right and left hemispheres (Gurian 27). This bundle of nerves is approximately 20% larger in female brains (Gurian 27). Because of this, females can have "better cross-talk

between the hemispheres of the brain" (Gurian 27).

Other significant differences and their impacts are listed briefly in the chart below:

Females	Males
Take in more sensory details.	Take more moral risks.
Control impulsive behavior better.	Show natural aggression more likely.
Self-monitor high-risk and immoral conduct better on average.	Rely heavily on nonverbal communication.
Have better verbal abilities and rely on verbal communication.	Verbalize feelings and responses slower than females.
	Developed more in areas of the right hemisphere.
	Tend to be better at spatial tasks.

(Gurian p. 27)

Another researcher, Lynn Liben, of Pennsylvania State University, concludes that some of the boy-girl gap is because of cultural factors, but she also believes there really are biological factors (Gurian 27 - 28).

The second category of differences is chemical. One significant difference is in the amount of serotonin secreated. The male brain secretes less than the female brain, which makes males more impulsive and fidgety in general (Gurian 28). In the classroom, a teacher may observe that a male student is more likely to be wiggly, tap pencils, or tap his foot more often than a female student.

The third category of differences is hormonal. Females are dominated by progesterone and estrogen while males are dominated by testosterone (Gurian 28). While progesterone is a female growth and bonding hormone, the male growth hormone, testosterone, is the sex-drive and aggression hormone (Gurian 28).

How do these hormones affect learning? A female may tend to bond first

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before asking questions, where a male may tend to be aggressive first and then ask questions (Gurian 28). In a classroom, a teacher may perceive this as a male student acting out or misbehaving because of the initial aggressive actions.

Another hormonal aspect that affects the classroom that is typically avoided in education is mood.

> "Males receive five to seven 'spikes or surges' of testosterone every day, beginning in pre-puberty (generally around ten years old). During the spiking, hormonal flow can make their moods vacillate between aggressive and withdrawn" (Gurian 28).

For females estrogen and progesterone rise and fall throughout her hormonal cycle, which causes the well-known "mood swing" (Gurian 29).

Mood can influence classroom function, but it can also influence learning performance. For example, "when female estrogen is high, a girl scores higher on both standardized and in-class tests than when it is low. When male testosterone is high, the boy performs better on spatial exams, like math tests, but worse on verbal tests" (Gurian 29).

In middle school, males and females experience hormonal upheaval. Males have a difficult time managing the high amounts of testosterone surges, which often makes them have strange moods, anger, aggression, clumsy and awkward, unable to verbalize feelings, focused on girls but afraid of them, competing against other boys for the attention of girls, and unable to verbalize their feelings about the changes going on inside of them (Gurian 205).

Females find themselves in a more complicated picture than the boys. Girls are faced with high doses of progesterone, estrogen, and prolactin, which gives them mood swings, a wavering of self-confidence, a mind-set about how they fit into the world of other girls, as well as in competition with other girls for boys' attentions

(Gurian 205). The girls are also typically bothered by the immaturity of their male classmates, and they are willing to mask their real selves in order to find romance (Gurian 205). For many girls, this is also a time for harassment from others because of their physical changes. All of these hormonal changes affect adolescent learning. This is one reason that separate-sex classrooms are a good option for middle school students.

The next category of brain differences is the functional differences. Cell and blood activity are considerably different in the male and female brain (Gurian 29). In general, "boys use the right hemisphere more, girls the left" (Gurian 29). According to How the Brain Learns, the left brain "is the logical hemisphere" because it monitors "speech, reading, and writing", it evaluates factual material, it understands the literal interpretation of words, it detects time and sequence, and it recognizes words, letters, and numbers (Sousa 86). The right brain is the intuitive hemisphere because it gathers information from images rather than words. Language is processed in context by looking at body language and tone of voice, it specializes in spatial perception, it is capable of fantasy and creativity, and it recognizes places, faces, and objects (Sousa 86). Research has shown that people have hemispheric dominance, which affects personality, abilities, and learning style (Sousa 87). "Those who are left hemisphere dominant tend to be more verbal, analytical, and good problem solvers. Right hemisphere dominant individuals paint and draw well, are good at math, and deal with the visual world more easily than with the verbal" (Sousa 87). The dominance of hemisphere does not mean that people do not use both hemispheres, but it does suggest that if given a task that requires a lot of thought, a person will shift to the dominant hemisphere to solve the problem, or that during a simple task, one might use the dominant hemisphere so the problem can be solved more efficiently (Sousa 87). During learning, both hemispheres are involved.

Each hemisphere processes the information according to its specialty, and it will exchange results with the opposite hemisphere through the corpus callosum (Sousa 88).

As far as gender is concerned, there is a lot of hemispheric overlap, but "through PET scans and functional MRIs...males and females use different areas of their brains when accomplishing different tasks" (Sousa 92). However, females tend to be more left-hemisphere or bilaterally dominant and males tend to be more right hemisphere dominant (Sousa 92).

Beyond hemispheric dominance, research has been done that shows the female brain in general has a learning advantage. Ruben Gur, from the University of Pennsylvania has used magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) along with other brain imaging techniques to show that "the resting female brain is as active as the activate male brain" (Gurian 29). He also explains that "there is more going on in the female brain" Gurian 29). However, this does not make the female brain necessarily superior, but his studies do show that the female brain is using its resources, both quickly and often, and in more places of the brain (Gurian 29). This alone puts the female brain at a learning advantage.

At the Yale Center for learning and Attention at the Yale School of Medicine, Drs. Bennet and Sally Shaywitz, both co-directors, proved that "while performing specific tasks involving language, men use only one side of the brain while women use both" (Havers 1). This information explains why women recover better from strokes, and girls with reading disorders fair better than boys with the same disorder (Havers 1).

Why do female brains use both hemispheres better than male brains? Parts of the corpus collosum, which is the connective tissue between the two hemispheres of the brain, is larger in women's brains than in men's. This indicates "that women

are more likely to use both sides, while men's brains are more assymetrical" (Havers 2). This doesn't make the female brain better, but even with similar abilities or outcomes to a task, the functions for performing the task are different (Havers 2). Because male and female brains are organized differently, their preferences in learning differ as well. The cause of gender dominance is not relevant, but what is important to educators is what can be done in the classroom to activate both hemispheres during learning.

The final brain difference seen between the genders is in how emotion is processed. Because this is the least understood area of brain differences, many believe it is not essential to learning (Gurian 31). However, the brain research shows it is crucial (Gurian 31). The emotive material for boys moves from the limbic system down to the brain stem, which is where the fight or flight responses are stored (Gurian 29, 32). Girls on the other hand move the emotive information upward to the upper brain where the complex thought occurs (Gurian 29, 32). This means that a female will be more likely to process the pain and get help from others because she is using the part of the brain that can verbalize and reason (Gurian 32). On the other hand, a male will either become physically aggressive (fight) or withdrawn (flight) (Gurian 32).

What are the emotional effects seen in the classroom? For the male learner trying to process the pain from a crisis or arguement before school, the aggression-and-withdrawn response "short-circuits intellectual and academic learning because his emotive processing is taking longer and involves less reasoning" (Gurian 32). He may be unable to learn for much of the morning, which makes him more emotionally fragile just because he has fewer brain functions available to process information. The females can process a crisis or arguement faster, which allows her to move on and learn once she has verbalized (Gurian 32). However, the female is emotionally

fragile as well. Girls tend to take things more seriously, and they process more emotional material, which sometimes makes females feel overwhelmed (Gurian 32).

One thing that is important to mention is that there are many exceptions to the previous explained scenario. "Many things are going on in each brain and personality that can outweigh gender difference" (Gurian 33). What educators need to be aware of is how their students are processing emotive information. If a student becomes violent or withdrawn instead of moving through the emotions verbally, an educator must try to intervene to help students process emotions in healthy ways (Gurian 33). This may be where a counselor steps in. However, the counseling profession tends to rely too much on words for many males. An approach that has worked is based on the "socratic model of walking and teaching" (Gurian 225). Doing something physical is good for stimulation of the limbic system and emotional processing for any child, especially for many males (Gurian 225).

After looking at five categories of differences between the brains of males and females, it is important to connect that information to the classroom. "Schools are structured environments that run according to time schedules, favor facts and rules over patterns, and are largely verbal (Sousa 94). These things seem to point toward the functions explained in the left hemisphere. This means that typically girls feel more comfortable in this environment, while right-hemisphere dominant learners (mainly boys) are not comfortable, which might explain why boys tend to be the discipline problems more often than girls (Sousa 94).

In the middle school classroom, here is a summary of key ways to ensure the classroom environment is friendly to learners of both genders:

For the Boys

* Make sure every middle school teacher is trained in male hormonal and adolescent brain development.
* Use separate-sex groups and classes whenever possible.
* Increase group work and pair work.
* Increase character education and absorb it into all classes.
* Have high expectations, both in academic areas and in social maturity.
*Talk about and model "heroic" behavior, ideas, and stories that show adolescents what is means to truly "be a man," that is, an adult male who is essential to his community's care and development.
* Offer boys rite-of-passage experiences
* Provide boys with quick tension-release strategies, both within and outside the classroom.
* Teach and integrate emotional literacy and emotional development curricula in all courses, not just human growth and development class.
*Teach sexual ethics curricula in all applicable courses, including gym (where boys, especially after physical movement, can often be honest and attentive about links between emotional and sexual feelings.
* Teach media literacy in all applicable courses, and help train parents to know the effects of prolonged exposure to video games and television on the developing brain of the adolescent child.
* Bring in mentors from the community for every young person who needs one, and match every middle school student who is capable with an elementary or preschool student; consider making mentoring a homework assignment.
* Carry out consistently applied discipline systems in all classes, with teachers and administrators working as a discipline team, rather than isolated authorities.

(Gurian 257-258)

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For the Girls

* Use separate-sex groups and classes whenever possible.
* Call on young men and women equally in class, when possible; if a few kids dominate--often a few attention-seeking boys--discuss with the whole class what is happening, and allow the class to help develop solutions.
* Teach all subjects with the use of field trips, physical movement, and multi-sensory strategies.
* Be very careful about technology; use fairness, being aware that girls need computer time equal to that given to spatially prone boys.
* Make sure every girl has at least one female role model in the school to bond with and look up to.
* Offer girls rite-of-passage experiences.
*Give girls hands-on methods for learning math.
* Teach character education with universal principles of character; also pay attention to what a girl might mean by good character, and how this might be similar or different from what boys might mean by it.
*Have high expectations, both in academic areas and also for social maturity.
*Bring in mentors from the community for every young person who needs one, and match every middle school student who is capable with an elementary or preschool student; consider making mentoring a homewrok assignment.

(Gurian 258 - 259).

These goals may seem like lofty expectations, but these are the things the Gurian Institute has found to be part of the "ultimate middle school classroom". Teachers cannot individually go out and conquer all the ideas listed, but can choose some of these things to try.

If gender differences seem too overwhelming, and an educator doesn't know where to start, one good idea is to attempt to stimulate both hemispheres when doing a project, test, or assignment. One practical idea that can be used in every classroom is to deal with concepts verbally and visually (Sousa 97). For example, by alternately using an image as well as discussion, both hemispheres become engaged. One may show a short video clip and then discuss what was shown. Another example is to list words on the board that represent the key concepts being taught but then use a diagram to show the relationships of these terms.

Another practical idea is to discuss concepts logically and intuitively (Sousa 98). An example for a literature class would be to have the students read a portion

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of a play or story and then have them write an ending based on the facts already known, or in history, the facts could be presented and then students may be asked to answer questions like, "What would have happened if...?" in order to get the students to come to a conclusion based on the facts.

The next practical idea is to avoid conflicting messages (Sousa 98). A teacher needs to make sure that the words, tone, and pacing match gestures, facial expressions, and body language (Sousa 98).

The last idea is to design activities and assessments for both hemispheres (Sousa 98). Allow students to write, draw, present a play, or construct a model. This will allow students to choose something that suits their learning styles.

As mentioned above, one option in the "ultimate middle school" classroom is for students to be part of single-gender groups or classes. Same-sex classes are the hot topic for some educators today.

What are the reasons and results of single-gender classes? In the adult world, men and women enjoy each other's company, but it is often the case that at a gathering, the males and females will at some point separate themselves. Why? For many, it is much easier and more comfortable to do things with their own sex. Single gender classroooms allow students to be comfortable. "In employing this innovation, we are not in any way harming children, as they are already inclined toward this way of being, and we are potentially helping millions of children who aren't learning as well as we'd like in the naturally gender-competitive environment that coeducation is" (Gurian 203). For middle school students, separate gender options remove or reduce discipline problems. The reason? Middle school is the greatest time of "hormonal upheaval" (Gurian 205). These hormones affect academic stress, and students "lose the highest level of academic learning...that they are capable of reaching" because romantic expectations dominate their lives as well

as the students' inabilities to deal with the changes in their bodies (Gurian 205 - 206). Separate gender classrooms can be the one place that can be

"relatively free of the gender stresses encountered in the media, at home with siblings, on the street, on the Internet, and in other activities. It can be gender-safe; well mentored; and focused not on mating, romance, and psychosocial challenges related to hidden hormonal flows but instead on learning. Family and culture outside the separate-sex classroom or school can continue to be highly coeducational. The child thus has the best of both worlds" (Gurian 209).

So what are the results of single gender classes?

At San Francisco's Marina Middle School, the principle, John Michaelson reports that "parents and students have liked the program. It's more cohesive and less distracting" (Gurian 204). He also reports that test scores are on the rise and discipline problems are decreasing (Gurian 204).

According to the article, "Critics Are Too Hasty: All-girls Schools May Help", "education experts believe that same-sex schools offer a promising alternative for boys who are easily distracted or intimidated by girls. If successful, they may offer a partial remedy to the sharp decline in the number of boys going to college" (1). For girls, the single-sex schools allow girls to "develop self-confidence and leadership skills without being fearful of showing off their brains" ("Critics..."1).

At the Young Women's Leadership School in New York's East Harlem, everyone talks about the "100% passing rate on the challenging New York graduation tests and 100% college enrollment" ("Critics..."1).

In Louisville, Kentucky, at Southern Leadership Academy, the 820 boys and girls are in separate classrooms. Chorus and band are the only classes that remain coeducational. Some students say, "the change reduces distractions and eases pressures" ("Single-sex..."1). The principle also notes fewer discipline problems ("Single-sex..."2).

Nationally, about 15 public schools have same-sex classrooms that are

exclusively boys or girls schools according to Dr. Leonard Sax, who is a psychologist and physician who heads the Maryland-based National Association for Single Sex Public Education ("Single-sex..."2). "An additional 40 to 50 schools offer single-sex classes but don't require them" ("Single-sex..."2). Sax believes this number will grow if the government changes Title IX regulations to give schools more flexibility to offer single-sex education ("Single-sex..."2). A top Education Department official believes this change will occur by next fall ("Same-sex Schools..."1).

Critics maintain that "separate is never equal" and that students will not be prepared for the real world ("Single-sex..."2). Feminists say that "separating students by gender promotes boys' sexism and is poor preparation for increasingly integrated work places" ("Same-sex..."1). With the increasing talk about closing the achievement gap for all students, Nancy Girken, deputy director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, says that schools should focus more on "academics, discipline, increased funds, smaller classes, more parental involvement and better teaching" ("Same-sex..."2). If these things were implemented, the achievement gap would close, but a lot of these solutions are based on the budget, which is short in many school districts.

Teachers unions are at odds. "The National Education Association opposes single-sex schools, calling any expansion 'bad educational policy' that will divert money from proven solutions" ("Same-sex..."2). The American Federation of Teachers has no formal policy, but the AFT president, Sandra Feldmen, said, "single-sex education is 'not a cure-all', but ought to be made an option" ("Same-sex..."2).

Single gender education may not be for everyone, but in the past it's always been an option for students and parents with the money to attend private schools. Why can't public schools have the same opportunity?

III. Data Collection Process

Participants and Procedures:

Two out of five class periods, or approximately 36 students were participants in this project. Because I felt it was important to note the differences in gender, I needed to have classes that were single gender. I wanted the differences to be obvious. At the beginning of second quarter, I had two same-sex classes that I studied in depth for three out of four quarters of the school year. Letters were sent home explaining the philosophy behind a same-sex class, and parents signed to give permission to their student to participate. After some scheduling changes, my all girls class had 16 students, and my all boys' class had 20 students. Originally, both classes were set up with twenty students each, with students at various ability levels, but I lost four female students to moving and transferring schools. Each class period was approximately 45 minutes long.

During the last three quarters of the school year, I journaled once or twice a week about my observations in my single-gender classes. Throughout this time period, I continued reading about various aspects of the male and female brain, reading about research on single-gender classes, and made adaptations in the classroom based on my experiences.

Data Collection Tools:

The majority of my data comes from my own written observations, student work and assessments, and a student survey. I used my written reflections in order to adapt the necessary curriculum to suit student needs. By collecting various assessments, I was able to see differences in gender in regards to testing, homework completion, and culminating projects. The student survey at the end of the school year allowed the students to voice their opinions about how they felt they did in a single-gender class.

My data collection occurred throughout the school year. Students stayed in the same-sex classes during second, third, and fourth quarters. Throughout the entire process, I journaled on the similarities, differences, and other important observations. At the end of each quarter, I analyzed the students' grades to see if any changes had occurred. My hope was that with various adaptations each quarter, I would see an improvement in final grades.

Throughout this entire process, I continually had to fight off my own bias. Because the girls were so easily motivated and organized, I had to watch that I didn't automatically grade their papers with the idea that they would do well. Because the boys tended to be a lot more challenging on a daily basis, I had to make sure I was patient, but I also had to watch that I didn't grade in any special forgiving way just because "that's the way they are". What did I do? Instead of always collecting assignments and putting them in a folder marked with the class period, I would intentionally mix up students so I wasn't grading by class period, but I was just grading all of the student work at once. Another trick I tried every now and then was having the students put their names on the back. This worked well for the most part, but I also found that a lot of students forgot to put their names on the assignment entirely or names would continue to show up on the front anyway. So, my final idea was just not to look at names before I graded something; because this was in my power, I could control whether or not I looked for the most part. I wanted to grade fairly, but I also wanted to treat the students fairly and respectfully.

At the end of the school year, a colleague studying gender-based learning visited my classroom. I wanted my students to be able to discuss honestly their feelings about their same-sex classes for the year. So, my colleague surveyed the students and discussed their likes and dislikes about being in a single-gender class while I left the room.

IV. Analysis of Data

Process for 2nd Quarter: Boys' class

Throughout each unit, I collected student work, assessments, and noted student progress. Because my all boys' class lacked in motivation, the boys became one of my focus points, and by the end of the year, a lot of changes occurred in my all boys' class. During second quarter, I wanted to encourage the students to turn in their homework. Based on my first experience collecting homework, I found that thirteen out of twenty boys didn't turn in their first assignment for the quarter. This was the first obvious difference I had. I needed to find out if homework completion was based on ability, motivation, organization, or time constraints. So, I implemented plan number one. If every male student turned in seven assignments on time, we would go to the gym on Friday after our structured reading time. On Monday, December 10th, the students had four assignments toward their goal. Then on Wednesday, December 12th, a student didn't have his work done because he thought he would be excused since he missed the first fifteen minutes of class. He was the only student that stopped the class from reaching number five. I didn't have to say anything; the boys took over. One of them even said, "Just because you were gone for a couple of minutes doesn't mean that you don't have to do your work". On the flip side, on the same day, I had a student return after a three-day suspension. Because he knew there was a chance to go to the gym by the end of the week, he came back with all his work done just as if he had been in class. I paused to tell the class, and they gave him a round of applause. This was a student who rarely turned in a homework assignment during the entire first quarter. Is gym-time that important? Does working as a team make a difference?

What other changes did I make during second quarter for my boys? Well, I

never assigned an entire project without breaking up the due dates. For example, during the reading of The Giver, I graded the completion of the chapter questions by initialing those who answered all the questions each day. Then at the end of the novel, I collected the entire packet.

Another example was the collection of their vocabulary maps for each chapter in the novel. Every day I collected the boys' maps. Then at the end of the novel, I handed the maps back, the boys organized the words by chapter, and then turned them in.

My next step was to implement something I learned at DataNotGuesswork training. The philosophy is to never give students permission to forget. There are many things I could try to attempt in my classroom, but my thought was what would happen if I had my boys' class work toward turning in seven assignments in a row? Maybe if they could do the homework on a regular basis, it would become a habit. The only thing I changed at this point was that I included class averages on tests as part of the homework completion chart. If the class average was higher than 80%, then that would count as an assignment as well. The reason I had to include this was because the boys were begging for homework. They wanted to go to the gym more often, which meant they needed more assignments to get there. I didn't want the focus to be purely on homework. I wanted the focus to be what the students were learning.

Results for 2nd Quarter: All Boys' Class

Working as a team definitely made a difference for my all boys' class. When working toward seven total assignments with every student having to complete the homework, the boys met the challenge. They earned gym time. By breaking up a vocabulary assignment into small daily parts and collecting each part individually, the students again were successful, and the class had a 100 percent completion rate.

As far as making homework become a habit, it worked during second quarter. The boys wanted the gym time so badly, that they were begging for homework. So, when I switched the focus of homework completion to including a test average in addition to the homework, the boys again, met the challenge. They boys' class average on the final novel test was one of the highest, with a 91% class average. They exceeded what I believed they would do.

Academically,I saw some exciting changes. During first quarter, my male students in my all boys' class averaged 70.35%. The interesting numbers were the jumps made from first quarter to second quarter. The boys went from 70.35% to 80.65%, which was about a 10% increase. The major changes that occurred between these two quarters were the changes to the single-sex classes and changing my testing strategy from all written tests to all multiple choice, true/false, and matching tests. For the all boys' class, I also implemented the homework completion chart which allowed them to work towards gym time.

Process for 2nd Quarter: All Girls' Class

Second quarter was full of learning experiences in my all girls' class. The girls didn't need a reward in order to do well. Despite having a variety of ability levels, most of the girls did their homework without the effort and organization on my part. I could assign something, the girls would quietly work, and then they would turn in their work. For example when reading The Giver, the girls tended to have their chapter questions ready on a daily basis. So, instead of having me initial their work, I had the students check their own work with a key that was posted in various places in the room. This gave the girls the first ten minutes to check their work, move around, and catch up with each other. Another benefit to having an entire class do the work expected, was that after the girls checked their work, we could have a class discussion, the girls could read in groups, or choose to read on their own. Most of

the time, the girls read comfortably on bean bag chairs or on the floor. There were never fights over the bean bags, and I never had to monitor their behavior. The need for a step-by-step approach was not necessary, which meant that class time was spent discussing symbolism and other student connections. With so much more accomplished in one class period, the girls quickly moved ahead of the other classes.

So, the first thing we did was plan out our calendar. The girls decided it would be interesting to write the test for chapters 13 - 23, and then they wanted to read A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens as an extra unit. During the two weeks that my other classes were still reading the novel, the girls class wrote a test and then read A Christmas Carol. The test-writing was a good experience because we could discuss what kind of options to include in a multiple choice question, how to phrase a true/false question, how to set up a vocabulary matching section, and what was important to think about when writing an essay question. After a lot of discussion and editing, the test was complete, and their next job was to create a study guide. After the girls took the test, we read A Christmas Carol. This was great because we sat in a circle in bean bag chairs, took turns reading out loud, and discussed what we read as we went. We didn't have worksheets, a test, or daily quizzes, but if someone didn't read, I could still tell during our discussion. At the end of the book, we watched the movie and then made holiday cards. I brought in my rubber stamping materials and paper, and the girls brought in breakfast. I didn't need a sign up sheet or a list on the board for food. The girls brought what they could, and we shared breakfast. After breakfast, I demonstrated how to use the stamping materials, and the time flew by quickly. The cards the girls made were for them to give to their friends, but the assignment part was that they needed to give at least one card to someone they needed to make amends with.

Results for 2nd Quarter: All Girls' Class

Because the girls were already motivated to do well, I found myself a different teacher. I became more constructivist in my teaching style, and the girls were given more say in what went on in class. I also found because I didn't have to spend my time monitoring behavior and homework completion, I had time to work with individual students and small groups. With so much more accomplished in one class period, the girls moved quickly ahead of the other classes.

When they wrote the test for The Giver, I enjoyed watching the girls interact with one another as they dug back into the novel to prove their answers. It was an eye-opening experience for them, and I heard a lot of comments about how much work really goes into writing a test.

When we read A Christmas Carol, I didn't feel like I had to be completely structured and all-knowing. I used a lot more reading comprehension strategies as we read, which was a good place for me to model some of the techniques from Mosaic of Thought by Ellyn Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman. By having the extra time, I think it created the opportunity for voice and choice in the classroom. We were able to study an extra unit of the girls' choosing and plan a fun activity day, which allowed us to bond. The bonding opportunity gave me an edge with my girls when we worked on other curriculum required by the district, because I had a little bit more knowledge about the things that they enjoyed, worried about, and wanted to learn.

Academically, the girls also saw some positive results. The girls in this class averaged 87.94% during first quarter. At the end of second quarter, the all girls' class average was 92.94%. This is about a 5% leap, which again was impressive, considering the high average for the girls at the beginning of the year. The changes for the girls may have occurred because the girls were given the opportunity to make

some decisions regarding the pace of the curriculum, the class was able to bond, and some students who appeared to be more shy or not at the same level, showed more effort. The single-gender class most likely allowed these things to occur. The other aspect as mentioned above, is that the test-taking format changed from an entirely written format to a format that included multiple choice, true/false, and an artwork or written section.

Process for 3rd Quarter: All Boys' Class

This quarter, I implemented a new policy in order to earn gym time. I wanted the focus to be the learning and not just the homework. I explained I wouldn't give any homework for the next unit, but instead, the students would be quizzed on the things covered in class the day before. Our topic of study was *The Diary of Anne Frank* and other World War II literature. This unit was a cross-curricular unit, and in the past, this was one of the high interest topics for my male students. Each day we read parts of the play from *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and after completing various scenes, the students were given a quiz. All quizzes were charted by class averages. Because I promised my boys no homework, the entire play was read out loud in class.

The second major activity during this quarter was our literature circles. Students chose a WWII novel to read with a small group. Because gradebooks usually don't reflect a student's ability to discuss literature (oral skills), I wanted to include a grade that would allow my gifted oral speakers to do well. With a class of boys, I didn't know what to expect. I used Harvey Daniel's literature circles handbook as a guide. During our class time, I explained the timeline available and the possible literature circle novel choices. Students chose a novel, formed a group, and then created their own calendar for their meeting dates. I provided last-date deadlines for the half-way point of the novel as well as the novel completion. Each

student had to have two roles each time the literature circle groups met. For the first meeting, which had to be at the half-way point in the novel, I decided one role for each student, and the students were able to choose a second role on their own. For the second meeting, which occurred at the completion of the novel, the students chose both roles within their group. During each literature circle discussion, I evaluated each student based on the roles as well as the overall discussion quality. The boys evaluated themselves. Both evaluations were added to create the final grade.

The final aspect of the World War II unit was a game project based on the literature circle novel. Each student needed to create a game. I broke the project into three main parts: create 25 questions, create a set of directions that includes illustrations and command statements, and create the game board. I explained one part each day during the three in-class work days. The remaining work was to be completed on the students' own time.

Results for 3rd Quarter: All Boys' Class

The reading of the play took this class six class periods longer than my other classes. The reason? We read the entire play in class. The extra time was worth it for this class because all but one student participated in reading a part throughout the play. Each participant read a minimum of three times. The boys were very eager to volunteer. So when I made cards with each character's name on it, I found the boys arriving as early as possible to my class just to get the part he wanted. Students were not tardy to class during this unit. Participating was important and exciting. They read the play parts with the character's voice and tone in mind. Another aspect that showed that the extra time was worth it was the overall class averages. The boys' class hovered consistently around 80%. The other classes (mixed and all girls') had more of a roller coaster effect due to students not

completing the reading of the play at home each evening.

My overall observations for the literature circles were positive. First, the boys chose the last-possible deadlines for their meeting dates. This wasn't a surprise to me, because the dates gave them more time to read. Another observation was the fact that the boys' discussions were more random and interrupted, but yet still seemed to cover the information required, and there was some form of structure that still allowed everyone to speak. What typically happened was a discussion leader would ask an open-ended question, and each group member would respond with his own opinion, which then would often lead to another idea, thought, question, or connection to something the boys had learned in another class. When the topic seemed to dissolve, the boys used their role sheets to help them refocus. The boys' discussions stayed on the topic, but the discussion patterns were more loose.

The only negative aspect for the literature circles was the depth of the conversations. The boys didn't make as many connections to their own lives or attempt to learn any of the vocabulary brought up by the "word wizard", which was the name of one of the literature circle roles.

The game project was a downfall for many of my boys. Overall, they did a nice job working on one part at a time, but the downfall was that nothing was completed at home. Another observation was that the boys immediately wanted to be on the computers to type their questions or their directions. No one wanted to hand write any form of a rough draft. The overall classroom atmosphere was noisy and encompassed a lot more off-task conversation. This could have been pre-spring break excitement, but I also think the boys needed a little more structure. Perhaps an outline for questions as well as the outline for the set of directions would have been better. Because work didn't get taken home, I saw a lot more zeros in the grade book for missing assignments than I had seen in a long time.

Academically, the boys class average for third quarter was 76.7%, which is still about six percent higher than first quarter, but about four percent lower than the second quarter results. I think the change here reflects what would be more natural for this group as an average, and perhaps the novelty of being in an all boys' class and earning gym time weren't such a novelty anymore for some students. Another major factor in some of the grades during this quarter was the missing game project from some of my boys. For a few, it made the difference of an entire letter grade. I also need to keep in mind that it wouldn't be fair or realistic, if the students were expected to gain ten percent each quarter.

Process for Third Quarter: All Girls' Class

At the beginning of the quarter, I gave my girls class (and my mixed classes) options as to how they would like to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The girls chose to read the play together one day and the next day, they would read the play in small groups. I broke up the acts and scenes in the play to accomodate the quizzes I created last summer. Each day the students were given class time to read (either as a whole group or in small groups), and the following day, the students took a quiz. I graded the quizzes during class on the days the girls read in small groups. I charted the class averages each day, which allowed the girls to see the immediate results.

The second major activity during our World War II unit was literature circles. Again, the girls were given novel choices, they chose their novel and group, and then created their timeline for meeting dates for the half-way point as well as novel completion. The girls were given the entire responsibility in choosing their roles. I outlined the roles into two categories: roles that required more work and roles that required less work. I explained to the class that each person needed to have one role from each category. The girls chose their novels, timelines, and roles the first day of the unit. During each literature circle discussion, I evaluated each student

based on the roles as well as the overall discussion quality. The girls evaluated themselves. Both evaluations were added to create the final grade.

The final aspect of the World War II unit was a game project based on the literature circle novel. Each student needed to create a game. I created a handout and explained the three main parts (create 25 questions, create a set of directions that includes illustrations and command statements, and create the game board) in one class period. The girls then used the remaining in-class work days to complete their game projects.

Results for 3rd Quarter: All Girls' Class

The reading of the play didn't take the students very long. The girls were responsible for reading the material not covered in class. For some, this wasn't a problem. Others, however, didn't read at home. The results showed in the quiz averages. The girls' averages ranged from 68% to 90%. When I asked the girls the reason for a few of the lower scores, the answer was that they forgot to read at home or didn't have time.

Another observation during the reading of the play was when we read in class. The same eight or nine girls out of sixteen volunteered to read. The girls never seemed eager to read, and many times they just read the parts. The girls seemed to lack the energy and voice expressions that the boys had. However, when looking at the quiz results, the girls did well when we read as a whole group. It was a good experience for the girls to see the importance of completing the homework by charting the quizzes. By the end, they improved on the last quiz that required them to read at home. I think they wanted to prove to me that they could be independent, which proved to be true for the majority of the class.

The literature circle discussions were also a success for my girls. The girls all chose different dates for their half-way point and novel completion discussions. This

was great because it gave me the opportunity to concentrate on one or two small group discussions a day. The discussions were structured and organized. The girls tended to have an order for answering, and would wait their turn to share their ideas. The girls allowed the entire role to be complete before moving to another topic. The girls were also much more thorough in their written details. When discussing vocabulary, the context and connections were important. Each group member in some groups even tried to define the terms by finding the sentence from the novel before the "word wizard" gave the answer. The girls also did a great job connecting their own lives with the characters' lives in their novels. They seemed more relationship-focused.

The girls game project experience was very different from the boys. The girls came to class prepared with the materials and information needed to complete the requirements. I spent my class time working with some of the students who needed more individual help. The atmosphere was quietly busy. Girls sat with a friend or two, worked on their games, and all but one student completed the project on time.

Academically, the girls averaged 90.18% during third quarter, which is about two percent lower than their second quarter average. At the same time, the third quarter average was still almost three percent higher than first quarter. Again, I wasn't expecting the girls' averages to increase at a steady rate of five percent when they started out at 87.94%. A B+ or A- class average is high.

Process for 4th Quarter: All Boys' Class

The curriculum for this quarter was our persuasive paragraphs, poetry, and a children's book unit. In hopes to keep the momentum going, I implemented the homework completion chart again. This time the goal was set at five homework assignments completed by all students in order to earn either gym time or time outside. I also included any quizzes as part of the homework completion chart.

Results for 4th Quarter: All Boys' Class

Spring break must have symbolized the end of the school year. Despite various charting tries, nothing seemed to motivate the entire group. No matter how simple or difficult the assignment, there were always two to three students who didn't have their work done. At first the students were random, but after a few weeks, it tended to be the same students. So, one day while those two students were out of my classroom, I talked to the class about it. We decided that if the same two students hindered the rest of us from going to the gym, that those two students would spend the class time in the office while the rest of us had fun. I thought this might be the trigger to keep the rest of the class working as a team. I was wrong. I still ended up with one extra random student who didn't complete the assignment. I again included quiz grades, and despite the class increasing their poetry pre-test, quiz 1, and quiz 2 scores, we never made it to five assignments completed by the entire class. I don't know if it was the nature of the curriculum or if it was just the end of the year, but homework didn't get done, quiz scores weren't as high, and the grades went down at the end of the year.

The academic results for fourth quarter did not do what I had hoped. The class average was 74.3%, which was another two percent lower than the third quarter results. This quarter was the one with a lot of missing assignments again. However, even with the decreases each quarter, the boys never went back to their first quarter average. Overall, the boys ended up with a 3.95% increase. This quarter also brought the highest grades for five students; three of which were B averages and two that ended the year with A's. During first quarter, these students were not earning A's or B's. Five out of twenty students is a 25% change for the better.

Process for 4th Quarter: All Girls' Class

The curriculum for this quarter was our persuasive paragraphs, poetry, and a children's book unit. During these units, I had a little less structure. I removed all my desks during our poetry unit, and the girls spent quiet class time moving from station to station while native spirit music whispered in the background. Bean bag chairs were at each station. During the children's book project, I continued to explain the entire project with a handout, and then the girls worked on their own to complete the requirements. At times, I would start each class period with small reminders about where the students should be by the time they get to class the next day.

Results for 4th Quarter: All Girls' Class

The girls thrived in the non-structured environment. I became more of a guide instead of the center of attention. The girls were creative, wrote great poems and children's books, and they made the end of the school year more relaxing. I had more time to read out loud to them because they finished their work early, and they enjoyed listening to a novel. The girls continued to stay motivated throughout the quarter, with the exception of one student who didn't complete her children's book.

Academically, the girls class ended the year with a 92.06% class average, which was about a two percent increase over third quarter. An A average is nothing to be too concerned about, and the girls' overall percentage increase compared to first quarter was 4.12%. I realize this group of young women were very intelligent, talented, and self-motivated, but I also had some students who started the year with some lower grades, and throughout the year, they pushed themselves to meet the standards set by the rest of the students in the class. For one student, that meant earning a 71% first quarter and an 84% by fourth quarter. For another student, it meant starting out at a 72%, and finishing fourth quarter with a 90%. These students had to have felt they accomplished a lot. These two examples may seem

insignificant, but in a class of sixteen students, I feel it is important.

Do I believe the results are because the students were part of single gender classes?

The changes could have occurred for a number of reasons. During first quarter the students could have just been getting back into the swing of things, learning the knew expectations and limitations of my Language Arts classroom, a change in curriculum from previous years, and the written testing format for unit tests and quizzes. Any of these things could have contributed to a lower average to start the year.

As for the increase jump in percentage during second quarter, a number of environmental things may have affected the students as well. For some, a change in weather brought students indoors after school instead of outside, which may have given students more time for school work. For others, it could have been the change in the curriculum from a focus on short story elements and writing to a novel study and reading newspaper articles.

Another thing that may have affected an increase in grades was the fact that I was charting pre- and post-tests more often, and for the all boys' class, I was charting their homework completion. Perhaps charting is a motivation for some students. Another change that may have allowed students to see some success was the fact that the all boys' and all girls' classes were smaller than what they had been part of prior to the schedule changes. During first quarter each class had approximately 26 students; after the schedule changes to create single gender classes, my all girls' class had 16 students consistently and my all boys' class had 20 students. Small class size can often be a contributer to student success.

A change in teaching techniques could have also accounted for some changes in student progress. My first two classes (including my all girls' class) of the

day didn't need as much step-by-step explaining, so students in these classes were given less teacher-focused explanations and more student-focused exploration options. When given the opportunity for kinesthetic activities, these students were a little more hesitant to begin, where my last two classes of the day (including my all boys' class) were eager and tended to be better "entertainers" in front of their peers. I was more of a guide at the beginning of the day, and at the end of the day, I had to guide with more structure and observation.

A final idea about why students had more success is because of when they had my class. Perhaps students perform better in the early part of the day, and tend to lose focus as the day continues. I can't say that the only reason my students saw academic success is because they were part of a single gender classroom. I would need to study single gender classes for a number of years to have answers to some of the questions and statements above or to be able to identify a student as a certain type of learner. I just know I have to be able to try different things to allow all my students the opportunity to learn the required curriculum. Perhaps in a future all boy or all girl class, I will be awakened to a new spectrum of similarities and differences. I know there is a lot of overlapping in the way our brains work, but it is interesting to see how gender affects students overall.

How do I feel single gender classes affected my students?

Overall Comments: the Boys

The following chart shows my overall observations for my all boys' class:

Male Learners

Needed a motivation/reward to complete homework	Multi-tasking was difficult for many students
Needed class time to complete homework	Did not complete long term assignmements unless collected in small parts frequently
Eager to participate in class discussions	Structured work time was necessary
Writing was difficult for some and not enjoyed by others	

For my male students, I feel having them in one class allowed them to be more successful. Many students grades increased at some point during the year, and I don't know that that could have happened without the different opportunities given to earn something they wanted. I was energized by our discussions, and feel that oral discussion isn't part of what teachers typically give students credit. I think my boys were far more excited to share what was going on inside their minds, and for the most part, they preferred to discuss those thoughts instead of writing them down. I think some of the discussions we had were just as successful as some of the journal entries written by my female students.

At first, I thought I created a monster by having 20 boys in one room, but only because they didn't use any etiquette in regards to interrupting one another during a classroom discussion. However, I felt good knowing that my boys were going to come in with energy, and I was responsible for channeling that energy into their work. There were times we did things more kinesthetically just because they needed to. If we were grading an assignment, I might have the answers posted around the room, and the challenge was to find the answers. If the boys knew they could use

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the assignment on a test or quiz, they were excited to see if they were correct.

I do need to mention that one male student failed to thrive in this setting. During first quarter, he earned a C; the remainder of the year, he earned an F. He was also the only student to ask if we were ever going back to our "old" classes like we had during first quarter. I believe this student wasn't successful because he typically worked in a group of all girls, which probably meant he didn't have to do a lot of the work, and he still earned the credit. Sure, he was eager to go to the gym, but he also knew that the rest of his "team" would carry his load if he failed.

On the upside, I had five students earn their highest grades by fourth quarter. One student even said to me, "We're staying in this class like this because we're doing better. I don't think I would be getting a better grade if I were in my other class" (referring to his 1st quarter class).

Based on the information from the survey given at the end of the school year by a colleague studying gender differences, I found out a lot about what my boys thought about being in an all boys' class. For the boys, the responses overall were more neutral. The boys seemed pretty evenly split on the overall enjoyment of the class and taking another class in the future. They liked the motivation to work toward gym time, and they didn't feel distracted. In their comments, they still showed a sense of comfort, and even though they missed having girls in class, they earned better grades. One student commented to me that I was keeping them in these classes because they were doing better. Another said that he would have never done a few of the projects or big assignments if I hadn't broken them down into smaller parts and collected them daily.

In this set of surveys there were also some more negative responses compared to the girls' surveys. One student commented, "It will only work if the teacher is open-minded and understanding". Another said, "One class with just boys

was ok, but more might be bad." However, in the discussion following the survey, other comments mentioned revealed they were more comfortable, they could be themselves, and there weren't any "oh grow up" comments from girls. At the same time, one student commented that this class was a disadvantage because if they had a chance to work in groups prior to being in an all boys' class, the girls would do the work.

Overall Comments: the Girls

The following chart shows my overall observations for my all girls' class:

Female Learners	
Motivated to do well internally	Organized
Able to multi-task	Structured work time was not necessary
Worked quietly with others during class	Enjoyed writing and were fairly good writers
Completed the expected homework	Participation was led by the same students
Completed various curriculum ahead of other classes	

I think that my females especially enjoyed having class together. I think they were more comfortable and willing to share their ideas because they didn't need to be nervous or embarrassed about what they wanted to say. Overall, they weren't extremely talkative, but I did see more participation from students who didn't have a lot to say (to an entire class) prior to being in an all girls' class. I also believe most of these students would have probably been successful in a mixed class because these students tended to be internally eager to learn. However, I feel that they also were given the opportunity to learn more because they didn't need to be held back by having to listen to a step-by-step explanation all the time. I had the opportunity to discuss issues concerning middle school girls without having them feel embarrassed;

I chose read-aloud novels that brought up typical issues girls face today, and we could discuss them. I also feel I had the opportunity to allow the students to have a lot of say in what we did in the classroom. Because the girls did what was expected, I was able to give them choices about what else we could learn.

For my girls, the survey results were overall more positive. Many of the female responses include a sense of comfort. The girls seemed to really enjoy the single gender setting. Many of the comments were positive and for the most part they seemed interested in being part of another class in the future with a similar setting. One stated, "This was fun! Mrs. Plitz was very fun to hang with and this really did help my grades. I felt more comfortable with just girls." Another girl commented, "I liked it a lot. I was more like myself and everyone got along because we have a lot of similarities." Yet another girl commented, "Guys are disruptive...I like having co-ed classes, too. I think it's nice having one class without any guys. It's a more comfortable atmosphere...guys can be really annoying, so it's good to have one class without them."

What was similar about my male and female learners?

Male and Female Learners

Wanted to succeed.	Wanted to have fun.
Enjoyed having a say in what happens in the classroom.	Needed structure and organization at some level.
Taught the same required curriculum with the same requirements and expectations.	Wanted things to be fair.
Enjoyed time with their friends.	

How did single gender classes affect me?

Overall, having the single gender classes allowed me to meet the needs of the gender differences in order for the majority of the students to see success. I was able to choose literature that suited the interest of the genders as well as structure various activities and projects to meet the organizational needs of my students. I feel

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having the girls in a class by themselves allowed them to relax and be themselves, and at the same time, the advantage was theirs to learn more than the other classes because of the extra time and their willingness to do work outside of class.

For the boys, I feel I was ready for the high energy class and their skilled discussions gave them opportunities to get credit for what they did well: discuss. I also feel they had a chance to be more successful because I found ways to help them organize their school work by reducing multi-tasking requirements. It felt good to see my students succeed because I had some control in the set-up of the class.

Another advantage for me was that I was allowed to be a different teacher each class period. I could make a lot of connections with students in different ways because I never had to teach the exact same thing every hour to students with drastic abilities in each class period. Even with some ability differences, I could accomodate the learners by their gender, which was helpful to most. My boys taught me to be more kinesthetic in my teaching style, and my girls taught me to appreciate independence, yet challenged me to keep moving ahead on the curriculum to keep pushing them to work harder.

V. Conclusion/Action Plan

I think in an eighth grade Language Arts class, it was worth while splitting two of my classes into single gender classes. I feel the students were overall more successful and were allowed to be themselves. By doing this project, I feel I had the chance to eliminate or set aside some of the social and emotional distractions students have during a constant-changing adolescence time. Because many of the students were more comfortable, I feel they were able to do their best. Do I believe the split in gender-alike classes is the only reason students saw success during the year? No. There are too many other factors in a student's brain, previous school experiences, and differences that occurred throughout the school year that may have influenced the academic changes I saw. Howeve , I do feel I learned a lot more about some obvious differences that I was not aware of prior to teaching to classes split by gender.

Do I believe all classes should be split by gender all the time? No. I feel it is important for males and females to learn to work together in a safe learning environment, but I feel that by giving these young men and women the opportunity to be themselves in at least one class at school, they felt more confident about who they were and the abilities and skills they had. If anything is implemented in public schools, I feel students and parents should be given the option to choose a single gender class for one or two class periods a day.

What will I do in my classrooms from now on? I will be more sensitive to the needs of the different genders' learning styles. I will try to activate and engage both hemispheres of the brain, as well as try different methods to motivate my classes to work as a team to complete homework. I will also try to give options in assessments, projects, and assignments to allow choice as well as variety of question types. I will

try to reduce multi-tasking difficulties by explaining the project in smaller parts. I will try to include kinesthetic activities. I feel voice and choice is important within the realms of a structured setting, so when possible, I will give the students choices. Finally, whenever possible, I will allow students to choose their own groups or assign individuals based on gender.

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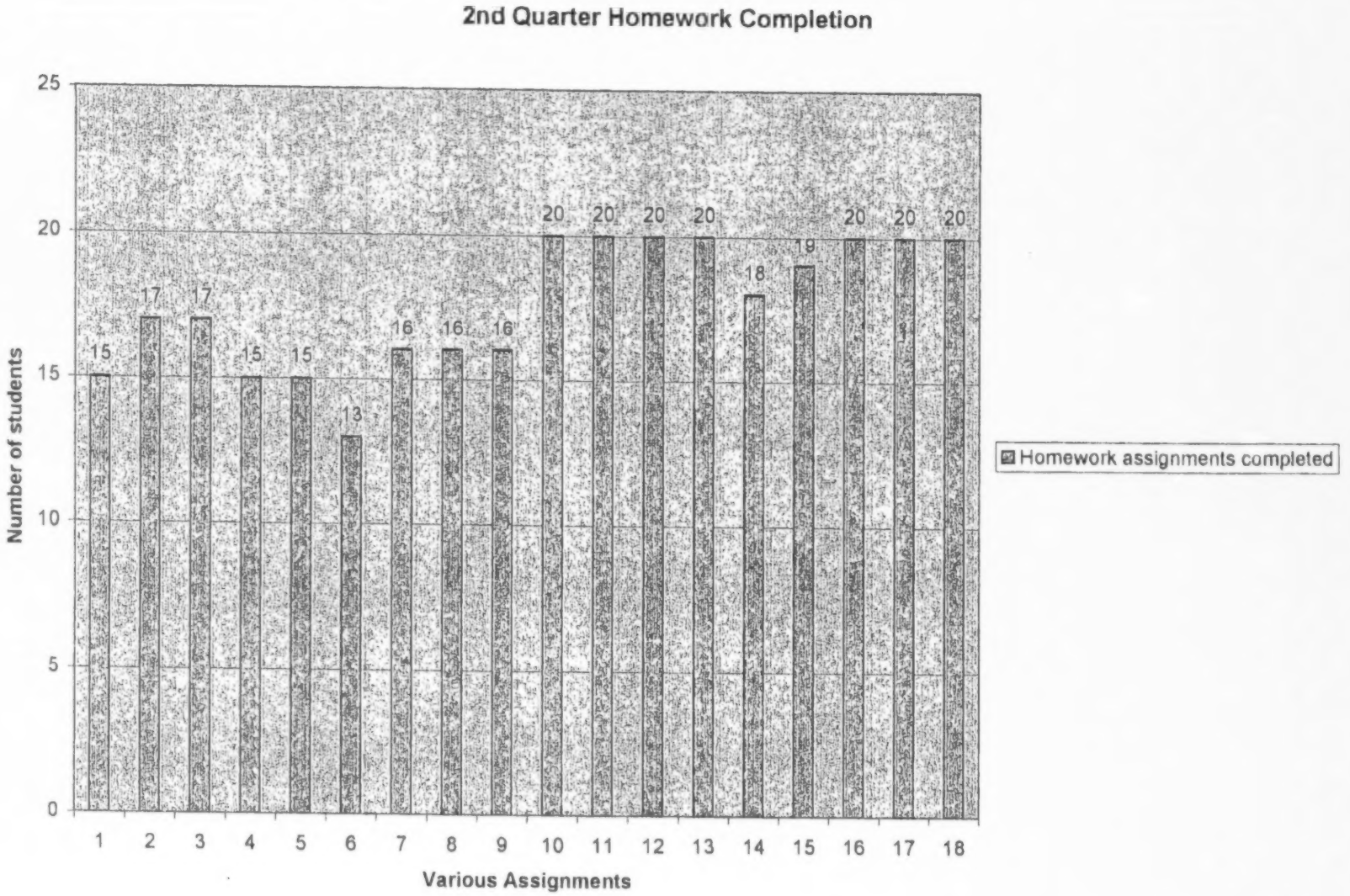
2nd Quarter Homework Completion
Number of students
Various Assignments
Homework assignments completed
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5
10
15
20
25
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15 17 17 15 15 13 16 16 16 20 20 20 20 18 19 20 20 20

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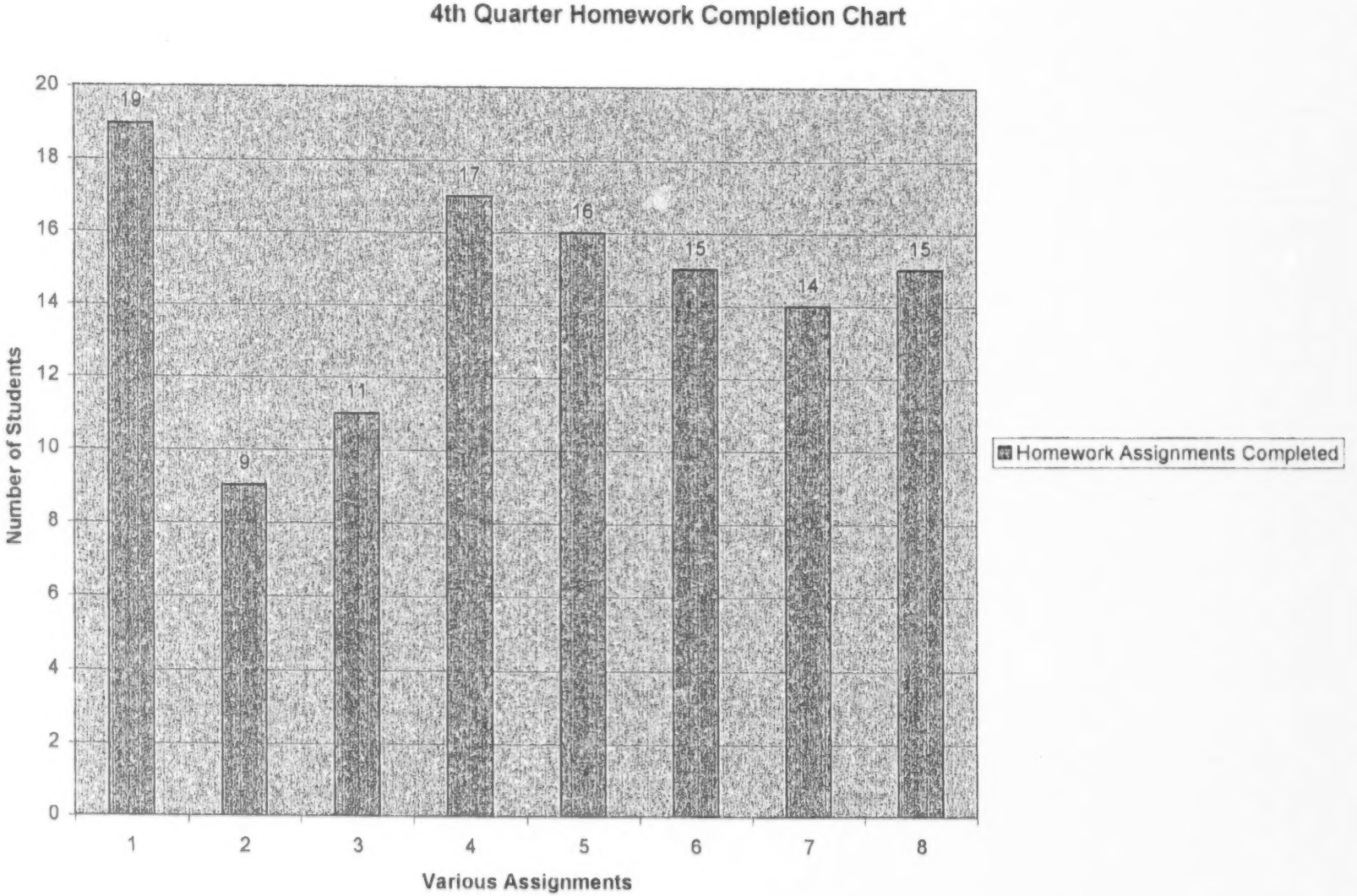

Single-Sex Classroom
Girls Responses

Class (circle one) Boys **Girls**	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
I enjoyed being in a class with just boys/girls.			**3**	**5**	**8**
			Average - 4.31		
Being in a class with just boys/girls had a positive effect on my grades in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
			9	**4**	**3**
			Average - 3.63		
The instructor related well to my class.	1	2	3	4	5
			1	**5**	**10**
			Average - 4.56		
If offered the chance, I would take another class with just boys/girls.	1	2	3	4	5
			5	**5**	**6**
			Average - 4.06		
The classroom atmosphere with just boys/girls was more positive than a co-ed class.	1	2	3	4	5
			4	**6**	**6**
			Average - 4.13		

Comments:

This was fun, to have just girls in my class. There was no pressure. I think that my grades were better and there weren't as many disruptions. Sometimes it was easy to cooperate, and had things done faster, with more free days.

I really enjoyed being in an all girls class, because we could get ahead of all the other classes, so we would have less homework. I also got to be in a class with most of my friends. We also worked really well with our teacher.

I enjoyed being in the all girls class. It was so much fun.

It was fun and a lot easier to get stuff done. But boys are still fun and after a while you kind of miss them. Our class was awesome though. Mrs. Plitz really treated us fair.

I thought we had to work with a group/partner too much and I don't really get along with people in this class very much. Otherwise this class is fine.

This was very fun! Mrs. Plitz was very fun to hang with and this really did help my grades. I felt more comfortable with just girls.

I've had fun in this class and it seems like it's easier to learn with all girls!

I liked it, I felt more comfortable asking questions.

Guys are disruptive. Their class had really bad grades and our girls class had good grades. The co-ed classes had both grades and most of the good grades were girls and the bad grades were mostly girls.

I liked having an all girls class because then we were able to do things that we couldn't do in a co-ed class. But I like having co-ed classes too. I think it's nice having one class without any guys. It's a more comfortable atmosphere with all girls. The guys can be really annoying, so it's good to have one class without them.

They guys at my school are rather annoying and disruptive.

I liked it a lot. I was more like myself and everyone got along because we have a lot of similarities.

It rocks! All my friends are in here!

Abridged Discussion notes:

-We got everything done faster because of all girls.
- Not as many distractions, more work time.
- We worked better, got to pick our own groups, relate better.
- Guys can be fone sometimes
- Mrs. Plitzuweit didn't have to explain as much

Single-Sex Classroom
Boys Responses

Class (circle one) Boys Girls	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoyed being in a class with just boys/girls.	1	2	3	4	5
	3	**3**	**6**	**3**	**3**
			Average - 3.00		
Being in a class with just boys/girls had a positive effect on my grades in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
		2	**12**	**2**	**2**
			Average - 2.78		
The instructor related well to my class.	1	2	3	4	5
			6	**8**	**4**
			Average - 3.89		
If offered the chance, I would take another class with just boys/girls.	1	2	3	4	5
	4	**3**	**5**	**3**	**3**
			Average - 2.33		
The classroom atmosphere with just boys/girls was more positive than a co-ed class.	1	2	3	4	5
	2	**3**	**8**	**1**	**4**
			Average - 3.11		

Comments:

It will only work if the teacher is open-minded and understanding along with laid back.

Neutral

One class just boys was ok but more might be bad.

I HATE Co-ed classes.

I don't think we should do this.

I'd rather have a co-ed class.

It was pretty fun.

I didn't like not having girls in the class, even though I got a little bit better grades.

Abridged Discussion Notes:

- didn't like it, miss girls, couldn't talk to girls.
- more comfortable in front of the class.
- you can be yourself more.
- if we have groups, they (girls) do the work.
- did more fun stuff.
- worked better
- more laid back.
- more comfortable.
- no "Oh Grow Up" comments from girls.

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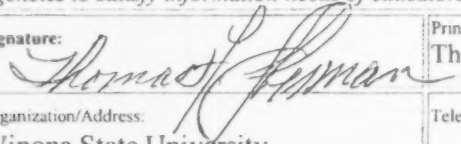
Signature: 	Printed Name/Position/Title: Thomas F. Sherman, Professor. Dr.	
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